UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/804
S/24982
18 December 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-seventh session
Agenda item 97 (c)
HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-seventh year

Letter dated 17 December 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In connection with the letter of Dr. Momcilo Grubac, Minister for Human Rights and the Rights of Minorities of the "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" submitted by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations, Mr. Dragomir Djokic, on 11 December 1992 (A/47/781), I would like to mention the following.

The Republic of Croatia wishes to reiterate its position that the distribution of this letter, as well as similar letters, constitutes participation in the work of the General Assembly and, therefore, is a breach of General Assembly resolution 47/1, of 22 September 1992, which states "that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) ... shall not participate in the work of the General Assembly".

However, since this letter has already been distributed, I am compelled to respond to various fabrications and misinformation contained therein:

(a) While stating that Serbia and Montenegro have no territorial claims to Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is stated in the letter that "[Bosnian Serbs] had their state in Bosnia and Herzegovina centuries before the Ottoman Empire occupied those regions and before Islam was introduced there". This statement has no historical validity whatsoever and can only be understood in the context of an effort to build up a case for Serbian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina through a campaign of public misinformation;

(b) The Republic of Croatia is named as the aggressor in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it is claimed that some 40,000 to 60,000 regular Croatian troops are fighting in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This assertion is blatantly false. The correct facts are the following:

(i) The Republic of Croatia has stationed some of its troops on the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina in those regions from which Serbian forces have been continuously attacking Croatian cities and towns within the Republic of Croatia, causing serious loss of life to the civilian population, as well as tremendous destruction of property. This is particularly the case in the regions of Dubrovnik and Zupanja. These forces have served to defend the borders of Croatia and have not taken part in the fighting in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is in accordance with the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia of 21 July 1992, which states inter alia that "both States will sustain their past successful cooperation and continuous coordination of the defence activities in the contiguous zones of the two States";

(ii) The ethnic Croatian forces which are fighting against Serbian aggression in the territory of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina consist of members of the local Croatian population who have taken up arms in order to protect themselves, their families and their property against Serbian forces which are conducting a genocidal policy against Muslims and Croats known as "ethnic cleansing". The Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina are represented in the ranks of the Croatian Defense Council (an organization of ethnic Croats living in Bosnia and Herzegovina) as well as the Territorial Defense units. It is important to mention that according to the above-mentioned Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation "the armed component of the Croatian Defense Council is an integral part of the united armed forces of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Croatian Defense Council will have its representative in the joint command of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina";

(iii) According to the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia of 21 July 1992 "the two States will, should the efforts of the international community remain ineffective, take all necessary steps in order to establish broader cooperation in the military sphere and coordinate military operations in order to definitively repel the danger threatening them". In the annex to this Agreement, signed on 23 September 1992, it is further stated that "in accordance with the right to self-defence and joint defence from aggression, a joint Committee will be established in order to coordinate defensive efforts until aggression has been stopped entirely". It is clear from this Agreement that the Croatian armed forces are seen as an ally against Serbian aggression by the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and not as a force of "aggression". While armed forces

of the Republic of Croatia are not presently conducting operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, their possible future involvement, in agreement with the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, would be within the joint defensive arrangement between these two sovereign States. It is also clear that any provision of weapons by the Republic of Croatia to Muslims and Croats fighting in the armed forces of the legitimate Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be in accordance with this Agreement;

(c) It is also important to mention that the Republic of Croatia is not an "aggressor" but a victim of Serbian aggression. This fact has been pointed out in various United Nations resolutions and resolutions of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as the Final Communique of the sixth extraordinary session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held at Jeddah on 1 and 2 December 1992, which strongly condemned "the Serbian aggression against the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia";

(d) Among the unfounded charges of persecution of Serbs in Croatia, the letter of Mr. Grubac states that Serbs are being forcibly converted to Catholicism. This charge is particularly repugnant, not only because it is totally untrue, but because it consciously seeks to add a component of religious hatred and intolerance to the conflict in former Yugoslavia, the ramifications of which might go far beyond the borders of former Yugoslavia. This attempt to create divisions and hatred on the basis of religious affiliation deserves the strongest possible condemnation.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the greatest threat to the Serbian people is not the policies of the Government of Croatia, Islamic fundamentalism or the Catholic Church but the policies of the Serbian Government and the radical Serbian elements in the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is these individuals and institutions, as well as the apologists for their policies, who are creating the greatest danger to the Serbian people by attempting to create a climate of hate, fear and intolerance between the Serbs and their neighbours.

I would kindly request that you have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 97 (c), and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dr. Mario NOBILO
Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Croatia to
the United Nations